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U.S. POLICY TOWARDS CUBA FOR THE NEXT DECADE

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Since the revolution that brought Castro to power thirty-seven years ago, U.S.-Cuban relations have been characterized by mutual disdain, security concerns, and international competition for influence, with occasional partial respites. When the Cold War thawed, and the strategic justification for U.S. Cuban policy evaporated, powerful domestic factors kept it largely locked in place. U.S. policy towards Cuba seems inconsistent with both the National Security Strategy and economic goals for the region. An uncontrollable crisis looms as Cuba struggles to overcome the legacy of the Castro regime's economic incompetence. If Castro fails to maintain control, one very serious threat to U.S. interests will be migration. Accordingly, the United States cannot wait too long, or it may be overtaken by events. A fresh approach is overdue. This paper examines two such possibilities and provides a recommendation as to which might work best. These options are then filtered through existing U.S. regional interests and a set of critical dynamics that will affect any policy decision. The end result, I will argue, is a recommendation that best fits U.S. interests in the Caribbean.

INTRODUCTION

U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) calls for regional policies which engage us, enlarge our presence economically and politically, and promote democracy where it is fledgling or does not exist. One of our major economic goals is to liberalize world trade by forming free trade area agreements and seeking to minimize tariffs and restrictive trade measures.¹ Within our own hemisphere, the United States has slowly moved towards fulfillment of the NSS precepts with 34 out of the 35 nations of Latin America. Economically, the U.S. has moved forward strongly through the formulation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Numerous Caribbean countries have demonstrated positive economic and political progress in the last decade. At the potential military and economic center of the Caribbean lies Cuba -- a country that has maintained fairly strong ties with most of Latin America, yet has resisted change for the past three decades. A highly literate population, and a still viable military, set Cuba vastly apart from the rest of the region. Yet U.S. policy towards Cuba, both past and present, ignores these facts and seems inconsistent with both the NSS and U.S. economic goals for the region. The United States trades with China, and now even with Viet Nam. Neither is a democracy and both are repressive, yet Washington continues to embargo Cuba. For these incongruous policies to exist within the framework of one NSS, U.S. Cuba policy for the last 36 years has traveled down a twisted road marked by a focus on one man and the regime he created. The stumbling block to any change in policy has always been Fidel Castro. For the past few decades, the United States has had a policy aimed at deposing Castro rather than seeking stability in Cuba.

Since the revolution that brought Castro to power thirty-seven years ago, U.S.-Cuban relations have been characterized by mutual disdain, security concerns, and international competition for influence, with occasional partial respites. When the Cold War thawed, and the strategic justification for U.S. Cuban policy evaporated, powerful domestic factors kept it largely locked in place. The Cold War continued in the Caribbean, even as it vanished in the rest of the world.² Recently, signs of a thaw were becoming evident. In the last six months, President Clinton had initiated several measures dealing with expanded migration, increased travel opportunities, looser controls on the flow of dollars to Cuba, and -- most important -- opposition to further restrictive legislation such as the Helms/Burton Bill. Unfortunately, Washington allowed the emotional impact of the Cuban shootdown of two unarmed planes over international waters in February 1996 to deter it from the larger issue of revamping an outdated and failure-prone policy. Suddenly, the U.S. returned to dangerous rhetoric and rescinded previous warming moves. Most damaging, the President has reversed his position on Helms/Burton and even hastened its passage in Congress. These moves are arguably both politically and militarily feasible, but they are also short-sighted. They leave very little room for maneuver should an uncontrollable crisis in Cuba break out.

An uncontrollable crisis looms as Cuba struggles to overcome the legacy of the Castro regime's economic incompetence. If Castro fails to maintain control, one very serious threat to U.S. interests will be migration. Even less-apocalyptic endgames could result in unmanageable waves of outmigration that would dwarf the Mariel exodus of 125,000 Cubans in 1980.³ Ninety miles of ocean is not a lot of distance for desperate people to risk crossing. It is also too close for the U.S. government to risk waiting out the crisis in the hope that

"everything will somehow work itself out." Washington needs to take the long-view for once when considering future policy towards Cuba. It cannot wait too long, or it may be overtaken by events.

The United States must prevent a potential "thugocracy" from arising in a Cuba vacuum left by Castro's eventual exit. Radical groups seeking quick-fix, hard-line solutions or a too-soft approach will only lead both countries down a murkier path. Massive financial aid pumped into a failing Cuban economy will do nothing to create a viable infrastructure and a more diversified economic base. International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans need also be tied to reforms in Cuba, but those reforms must be realistic. This may be the point where multi-party democracy is unrealistic. Peru already stands as an example of countries doing reasonably well without the full democratic trappings the U.S. seems to demand of all Latin American countries. Democracy is the desired end-state from our NSS guidance; however, to work it need not be the American version of democracy. Cuba is not even in need of our constitution as a model for democracy as it has a superb version of its own from 1940. Hailed as one of the most progressive of its time, and still relevant today, even Castro laid claim to the constitution's defense after the ill-fated attempt to overthrow the Batista regime on July 26, 1953. During Castro's trial after the failed attempt, Castro stated that had his rebel forces seized power, they would have restored the 1940 constitution, implemented agrarian reform in the countryside and profit sharing in industry, and confiscated misappropriated wealth.⁴

All this leads to the question of whether we should stay the course or try a fresh approach. Current policy has been in effect for 36 years, yet it has failed to unseat Castro.

As Radio Marti's Richard Planas has said: "We have failed to notice that the wall -- which indeed is falling -- is leaning in our direction. Consequently, by pushing rather than pulling, we have actually helped prop up the regime."⁵ This misguided effort on Washington's part would seem to suggest that a fresh approach is long overdue. This paper will examine two such approaches and provide a recommendation as to which option might work best. These alternatives were originally postulated by Gillian Gunn in her work Cuba In Transition. I have used the original models as starting points, from which to combine ideas and create slightly modified approaches. These options are then filtered through existing U.S. regional interests and a set of critical existing dynamics that affect any policy decision. The end result, I will argue, is a recommendation that best fits U.S. interests in the Caribbean.

THE OPTIONS

The two options to be laid out for analysis will be termed "squeeze-plus" and "squeeze-minus." Though I have borrowed the terminology from Gunn's Cuba in Transition, the first option contains elements from all of her "squeeze" options while the second contains elements of both "communication" and "normalization."⁶

"Squeeze-Plus"

As the title intimates, the overall effect of this policy option is to maintain or increase certain elements of existing U.S. policy. The basic components are:

- (1) Increase pressure selectively on U.S. allies, specifically on the other two NAFTA members, Mexico and Canada, to decrease or substantially eliminate investments and trading with Cuba. At a minimum, apply hard pressure on all U.S. allies to not undertake any further

investments or enter into any new trade agreements with Cuba.

(2) Wherever hard evidence of state sponsorship or knowledge of drug trafficking or transit activities exists, undertake and maintain vigorous prosecution of drug charges against the Cuban leadership.

(3) Maintain current travel restrictions, but increase pressure by lowering the limits of allowable expenditures by those entitled to travel.

(4) Publicly support organizations representing the conservative Cuban American faction, such as CANF, as legitimate candidates for a prominent role in post-Castro Cuba. This puts the United States squarely behind those Cubans who possess the business and leadership acumen to move the economy forward when the opportunity permits.

(5) Directly link any relaxation of the embargo to the actual holding of internationally observed municipal/national elections in Cuba *and* the full adoption of a market economy.

"Squeeze-Minus"

This option consists of two separate phases, the first of which could be viewed as a "no strings attached" gambit followed by a phase requiring a degree of reciprocity from the Cuban government. The current policy, up until the latest reaction to the Cuban shoot-down incident, could be viewed as one of "squeeze-minus." The first phase components would not require any change to existing laws or regulations unless President Clinton follows through with his threat of backing the Helms/Burton legislation. The components of each phase are listed as follows:

Phase I:

(1) Shift Administration remarks away from violent "campaign-type" rhetoric and more toward noninterventionist language which suggests the U.S. intends no threat to Cuba.

(2) Recognize the plight and rights of Cuban exiles, but fully stress that the solutions to Cuba's problems will come from within the society.

(3) Continue to process licensing requests from nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and officially encourage NGO's to send large amounts of humanitarian assistance to Cuban NGO's.

(4) Not only announce that the Neutrality Act applies to Cuba, but also follow up with vigorous enforcement.

(5) Limit military maneuvers in the region of Cuba's contiguous waters to strictly those of search and rescue operation training. Invite Cuba's naval forces to observe this type of training.

(6) Distance the Administration from the conservative wing of the Cuban American community (i.e. CANF) and establish ties with more moderate elements of that community.

(7) Cease the pressure on allies and other countries to refrain from investing in and trading with Cuba. (Hopefully, Helms/Burton has not already made this step impossible.)

(8) Announce the formation of a Presidential Task Force to investigate whether or not the CDA has met stated goals and the impact of it on relations with our allies in all regions of the world. (This would also apply to the Helms/Burton Bill, if passed.)

Phase II: The steps in this phase are not listed in any particular order; however, they are meant to be reciprocated between each step by a positive Cuban action. Cuban officials should understand this requirement as a series of parallel gestures designed to help build American domestic support for this policy rather than a strict tit for tat approach.

(1) Initiate bilateral discussions with Cuba on both the environment and drug interdiction. While these talk are underway, a discreet suggestion could be proffered to the Cubans indicating a willingness to discuss other related matters of interest to both parties.

(2) Establish direct scheduled flights that serve to increase communication and deliver direct mail service.

(3) Fund exchanges between members of both governments. Ensure that a fair number of each Cuban political leaning (*duros, centristas and reformistas*) is represented.

(4) Eliminate TV Marti. Successfully jammed by the Cubans ever since it was first launched, TV Marti is still funded at 11.6 million dollars annually and lacks for nothing but an audience.⁷ Reform Radio Marti so that it is no longer a conduit for the conservative Cuban American community.

(5) Relax the U.S. travel ban by eliminating the CDA caveat that limits the frequency of trips. Add two more categories that are able to travel: U.S. businessmen for research purposes and cultural exchange visits.

(6) Establish permanent offices for the Cuban press here in the U.S. first. Once the Cuban press is firmly in place, establish like offices for the U.S. press in Havana.

(7) Notify the Cuban government that internationally observed local elections, regardless of the outcome, will result in lifting of the embargo. Municipal elections judged free and fair by international observers would not necessarily meet the law's criteria. However, according to government sources, the CDA is not binding in this regard. The embargo was imposed by presidential proclamation, and all or part could be rescinded without congressional authorization.⁸ This loophole will disappear very soon if this option is not implemented prior to the signing of the stricter Helms/Burton bill due out for Presidential signature in the spring of 1996. The bill would convert into law all executive orders issued pursuant to the U.S. embargo and strip presidents of authority to extend, revise, or cancel a given executive order, thereby yielding to Congress an important presidential prerogative to set U.S. foreign policy.⁹

Each of these policy options must be viewed in light of how well they do or do not satisfy specific regional U.S. interests. Interests have been identified in numerous documents relating to the Caribbean region, the most important of which is the current NSS.

U.S. INTERESTS IN THE CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean will not be stable until the issue of Cuba is settled. Cuba may not be centrally located within the region, but it has the potential to be the hub of any coalition of Caribbean nations. A stable Cuba, linked amiably to the economic and security interests of the United States, should be the end state sought in any policy change. Any shift in U.S. policy aimed at achieving that stability must address and prioritize a common set of U.S. interests in the region. A review of the NSS reveals these interests: avoiding uncontrolled migration, maintaining peace and stability in the region, facilitating trade and economic

development, promoting democracy and human rights, and interdicting drug trafficking.¹⁰

Each option will be analyzed through the filter of these interests. Some interests will shift in priority depending upon the option. Before that analysis can occur however, it is important to consider the potential impact that unique characteristics of the region or U.S./Cuban governments pose in the equation. Any such list of characteristics can be expanded almost daily, as current events shape internal reactions. However, historically these dynamic factors have and will continue to create friction in any choice of policy options.

UNIQUE DYNAMICS THAT INFLUENCE ANY POLICY SHIFT

Seven themes have characterized U.S. relations with Cuba since the early 1800s and are likely to continue to exert influence in the future, regardless of the government in power in either country.¹¹ Three of these seven themes are of particular importance, and will affect the choice of any new policy: (1) Domestic politics will continue to influence Washington's stance towards Cuba; (2) Cuban exile politics will continue to play a continuous role in the debate; and (3) a deeply rooted Cuban nationalism will be a factor. In addition, several other elements, not as obvious as the first three, will play a role: (4) Racial issues will be just below the surface; (5) numerous important economic changes that have already taken place will have an impact; (6) Castro's presence or absence will influence any policy change; and (7) other internal political realities (e.g., factional politics) will be important. Following is a quick review of each of these factors and the potential role they might play in influencing any policy change towards Cuba.

Domestic Politics

Domestic politics become entwined in policy change proposals via two important conduits: conservative constituents and legislators, and moderate legislators. A more liberal policy change pursued by the Clinton administration will alienate some Cuban-American donors and voters. Moderate and liberal Democratic constituents concerned about Cuban issues are not likely to switch parties to protest an ongoing hard-line policy. So, a flexible policy marginally hurts Clinton's support while maintaining a tough stance has a neutral to slightly positive impact. Clinton advisors consequently have advised him not to authorize any policy adjustments likely to annoy conservatives.¹²

Many conservative and moderate legislators, some of whom receive monetary support from the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), react negatively to any overtures to Cuba. A prime example of this category are Senator Helms and Representative Burton. Very few liberal legislators protest hard-line tactics. Currently, and probably for the duration of President Clinton's term, conservatives far outnumber liberals in both the House and the Senate. Therefore, Clinton's desire to maintain good relations with Congress in order to realize his domestic agenda requires a more hard line policy.

Cuban Exile Politics

Beginning with the failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs, the exile population has been extremely influential in major policy decisions about Cuba. The exile influence emerged strongest during the Bush presidency. Early in the primaries, Bush received large campaign contributions from Jorge Mas Canosa, chairman of CANF, and other conservative Cuban

Americans. The original version of the Cuban Democracy Act (CDA) was far more focused on alleviating the plight of the Cuban people and increasing the embargo's impact on the Cuban government. However, the well-organized efforts of the CANF and the partisan politics of the congressional process significantly changed the CDA by reducing and removing many of the "carrots" while enlarging the "sticks." President Clinton found that an endorsement of the CDA, while campaigning in Florida for the democratic nomination, resulted in expanding the flow of campaign contributions. A month later President Bush, not willing to lose the support of Cuban American conservatives, grudgingly endorsed the full bill. The CDA was signed into law two weeks before the national elections.

The conservative factions of the exile community, most notably the CANF, continued to exert influence in the early months of the Clinton administration. Clinton's black Cuban nominee for the post of Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs was removed after conservative Cuban Americans concluded that the candidate was "soft on Cuba," based on his opposition to certain elements of the CDA. When a pro-forma call was made for the voluntary resignation of U.S. attorneys, the sole exception was the U.S. attorney in Miami, who was a Cuban American. During these months, there was an effort to loosen policy towards Cuba and, in accordance with provisions of the CDA, a decision was made to approve additional charter flights to Cuba. However, the conservative Cuban American community protested vehemently and the decision was soon reversed. Clearly, while Clinton has made moves that have not pleased the Cuban American conservatives, their influence continues to be a major political consideration. Some analysts have stated that organizations such as CANF figure far more heavily in the congressional races than the presidency.

Whichever the case, any policy change away from a tough(er) stance will have to suffer the bitter recriminations likely to emanate from the exile community.

Deeply Rooted Cuban Nationalism

Cubans have always been disappointed by the lack of U.S. support for Cuban independence in the 1820s. Over the years, and particularly after the passing of the Platt Amendment,¹³ they have perceived a certain high-handedness in the way North Americans encroached upon their sovereignty. All of these feelings have carried forward to the passage of the CDA, an incident that caused yet another nationalistic rallying around Castro. While very few Cubans think that the U.S. is ready to invade, many do believe that we seek to exploit any instability to try to overthrow the government in order to install a puppet regime of "rich white Miami Cubans."¹⁴ Exploiting anti-Americanism, Castro has appropriated and shaped Cuban nationalism to help sustain his regime.¹⁵ Defectors, as well as those stuck in abject poverty in Cuba, have often proclaimed to the media that even though they might dislike Castro, they would oppose any American invasion or threat against the sovereignty of Cuba. Cubans regard their nationalism as an expression of the highest tradition and ideals of Latin American nationalism.¹⁶ Any proposed policy change must take into account the strong effect of nationalism at every level of Cuban society. A policy that *not* threatens Cuban sovereignty will fail miserably.

The Race Factor

Race plays an important role in the daily life of Cubans. A certain degree of polarization exists between the black and white Cuban population both on and off the island. Black slavery in the early history of Cuba, and the U.S. failure to support efforts against that slavery, are fresh in the minds of black Cubans. Over 50 percent of the population of Cuba is black, yet the majority of the exile community in the United States is white. The material gap between non-elite whites and non-elite blacks is far less than it was before Castro came into power. Black Cubans are well aware that they would suffer the most if a shift in leadership resulted in the loss of free health care and education. The perception of most is that the white Cubans would return from exile and reestablish their old lifestyle, resulting in the loss of free government services. An even stronger fear involves the very homes they live in. There is a widespread fear on the island that Castro's fall will be followed by the return of a conquering horde of exiles, who will reclaim their confiscated properties and wreak vengeance on all who have collaborated with the regime.¹⁷ A policy change that implies the ultimate return of white Cuban exiles to positions of power will smack of racism and only result in even more nationalistic fervor.

Existing Economic Changes in Cuba

In recent years, a new generation of reformers in the Castro regime have pushed hard for the adoption of certain market-type reforms. They have met with some success, even though their efforts have resulted in the bifurcation of the economy. While the Cuban government is retaining the socialist system for the internal economy and the sugar industry, it is aggressively promoting an autonomous, externally oriented sector of the economy based on

foreign participation in petroleum, tourism, biotechnology, and other areas; the goal is to generate hard-currency earnings.¹⁸ Since these changes were just initiated, the economy has deteriorated still further, forcing Castro to relent to three modest liberalizing reforms in the domestic internal economy. The first of these provides for dollarization of the economy and allows Cubans to possess hard currency for the first time. The second allows for limited self-employment by individuals and their families in 140 trade, craft and service categories. The third establishes more autonomous cooperatives as a means of raising sugar and agriculture production.¹⁹ These changes have begun a process that, if allowed to flourish, will begin an inevitable trend of exposing more and more Cubans to the positive influences of a market-based economy as well as increased contact with capitalist ideas. A policy change that negates these minor reforms will stifle and further impede the economy, risking a wholesale collapse and a resultant mass migration.

Presence or Absence of Castro During Policy Change

It is tempting to try to wait out Castro until his health or popular support fail. But the longer Washington waits for that epiphany to occur, the greater the risk that Cuba will become another Haiti. Unless the United States is ready to risk a potential military involvement and a massive outmigration of Cubans, it can ill afford another "ungovernable" state in the Caribbean. Castro can do more to bring about positive change for Cuba if the supporting policy changes are filtered through his charismatic leadership. As already noted, even the most disgruntled and impoverished Cuban expresses the desire to see a Cuba "libre" on Cuba's terms. Those same citizens would likely support the same man who is responsible

for their destitute situation if they felt that Cuba's sovereignty was being challenged by threatening Castro.

Fidel came to power independently; and he was never a Soviet puppet. To many Cubans, he remains a charismatic figure: part hero, part father, and always larger than life. He is the personification of the revolution and, to some, the living symbol of the nation, sources of legitimacy that should not be underestimated even in these troubled times.²⁰

This is a powerful and prevalent belief within Cuban society. Those who recommend policy change without considering the influence of Castro, have failed to fully understand the strength of the "nationalism" thread that connects Cubans with Castro.

With Castro at the helm, the Cuban political machine is like a large ship with one captain. Though it turns slowly, the ship of state moves as a cohesive unit. Without Castro, Cuba could resemble a flotilla of small ships, each with its own captain and a different idea about what direction to take. Such a chaotic atmosphere is conducive to violence.²¹

The Internal Political Realities of Cuba

This stands as probably the most complex of all the factors affecting a policy change. It also appears to be the least understood by U.S. policy makers, if one may judge by some of the decisions made over the past 36 years. The economic crisis that has existed since 1989 has produced new leadership divisions based more on the debates over reform than on any struggle for power within the regime. The factions share a desire to preserve the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), maintain the social safety net for the population, and protect the country's independence from the United States. But they are in disagreement over the pace and extent to which market reforms must be introduced in order to find a way out of Cuba's *callejon sin salida* (cul de sac).²²

Within the Castro regime there are three policy tendencies. There is a wide gulf between the *duros* (hardliners), led by Fidel Castro, who represent the *fidelista* veterans, the PCC and the security apparatus, and the *reformistas* (liberalizing reformers), who stand for the liberalization of the polity and especially the economy.²³ Occupying the middle ground between the two is a swing group known as the *centristas* (centrists), who are more pragmatic than the *duros* but not as committed to liberalization as the *reformistas*. Castro and the *duros*, with some occasional support from the *centristas*, form a blocking coalition within the regime that limits reform. He would prefer to continue to try to re-equilibrate his regime through his customary blend of mobilization tactics, ad-hoc policy making and intimidation.²⁴

Besides Castro, leading *duros* are Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, Generals Abelardo Colome and Sixto Batista Santana and Jorge Lezcano Perez. In general, the members of this group share several characteristics: Most are veteran *fidelistas*, who have long exhibited unwavering loyalty to Fidel and to a lesser degree his brother, Raul. In addition, they control the party apparatus, espouse a hard-line in dealing with political deviation and opposition, and are ultra-nationalists.²⁵ *Duros* are committed to tight control over Cuban society in order to preserve the regime, and are prepared to resort to whatever measures may be necessary to remain in power. They are wed to socialism, opposed to market reforms, and look to political and organizational solutions for economic problems.

While still strong nationalists, the *centristas* advocate organizational and technical fixes within the existing economic and political systems. As pragmatists, they want to make the economy more efficient through organizational reforms, administrative decentralization, joint state-foreign enterprises, limited marketization, and privatization of the economy as necessary.

What support they give to limited political liberalization is based on pragmatic political and technical analysis rather than ideological tenets. Leading *centristas* include Carlos Aldana, Juan Escalona and Ricardo Alarcon.²⁶ However, the most important member of the group is Raul Castro. As Cuba's Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), he is without question a *duro* when it comes to the United States. On economic matters, however, he is pragmatic.²⁷ After criticizing the performance of military factories in the mid-1980's, Raul Castro instituted reforms that emphasized managerial discipline, decentralization and Japanese-style management techniques. These changes brought about improved production and efficiency, and by 1991, military officers were teaching these same techniques to civilian industries.²⁸ As the FAR downsized under the pressures of economic austerity, Raul Castro found a dual solution to the problem of newly released military members. Applying the same techniques previously used in the military factories, he handed over the management responsibility of numerous large farming cooperatives to former soldiers. The results were comparable. Finally, under Raul's guidance the FAR's construction company has been building joint-venture hotels and other tourist facilities, running a tourist company called Gaviota, and operating numerous quasi-private corporations (*Sociedades Anonimas*) chartered by the state. All this suggests that the military could emerge as an institutional force favoring economic reforms, even while adhering to a hardline position on questions involving internal order, nationalism and the United States.²⁹ Their assumption of a key and growing economic role ensures that as the Cuban economy develops and changes, the armed forces will help to shape the emerging new order.³⁰

The *reformistas* are liberals who seek to implement fundamental reforms. Notable

reformistas are Roberto Robaina and Carlos Lage. Roberto Robaina, the Foreign Minister, is the most powerful man in Cuba after Fidel and his brother Raul.³¹ They favor marketization and privatization of the domestic economy, while still retaining the state-provided safety net of health and education. Some even go so far as to suggest that political dissent be allowed in the form of a loyalist opposition. Many are economists, but all are constrained by the *duros*' control and a generally compliant population. This last point needs a bit more expansion because it has such a telling effect on any attempts at reform. Cubans must occupy themselves with the daily tasks of survival, and as a result most acquiesce to the regime or are too intimidated to organize or take collective action against the state. All such conditions contribute to *la doble moral* (duplicity) among Cubans, which further weakens the fabric of civil society because, to varying degrees, growing numbers of citizens are living in a second society: acquiescing in public and dissenting in private.³²

Thus any policy change must take into account the existence and influence of these three political tendencies within Cuba. A too-hard approach will be mirrored back exponentially by the *duros* and most of the *centristas*. A too-soft approach will be considered insincere, when taken in context with our past performance, and will not lend much credibility to the *reformistas*. Instead, it will most likely be used to the advantage of the *duros* once again. A carefully balanced approach, regardless of whether it changes much of our existing policy, must be followed so that it can filter carefully through each of the tendencies in Cuba.

We will now turn to the "squeeze" and "squeeze-minus" options, apply the factors just mentioned and produce a recommendation for policy change.

ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS AGAINST U.S. INTERESTS AND DYNAMIC FACTORS

U.S. Interests

"Squeeze-Plus": U.S. interests served by this option are in order of priority: transition to an exact replica of the U.S. form of democracy, promotion of human rights, facilitating trade and economic development, interdicting drug trafficking, maintaining peace and stability in the region, and avoiding uncontrolled migration.³³

The central thrust of this option is to maintain ever-increasing pressure on the regime in order to force Castro out of power. The ouster of Castro could come from the hands of a populace no longer able to endure additional hardships. Equally conceivable, members of Castro's regime, sensing the impending failure could remove the man as the last hope of preventing severe internal disorder. Regardless, the vacuum produced by a failed communist government should cause a movement towards its exact opposite -- democracy. A democracy favors an improvement of human rights, especially since the U.N. rapporteur could finally be introduced to assess and monitor a human rights program. On the other hand, the plan could also backfire. There could be a backlash based on perceptions of U.S. responsibility for Cuban suffering under the embargo. This in turn could lead to a strengthening of Cuban nationalism, and a rejection of democracy and human rights concerns. This, of course, would play directly into Castro's hands.

Currently the United States does not miss much economically from its lack of investment with Cuba. If U.S. allies begin to suffer from the penalties imposed upon them by the Helms-Burton legislation (which would punish them for profiting from U.S. properties

confiscated by the regime), Washington will at least have prevented any other countries from gaining a foothold in Cuba. It is true that several of our allies, most notably Canada, have increased investments in the Cuban economy. What is also true is that much of the investments are strictly speculative in nature. Investments are high in number but low in dollar value; that is, most of the investment is seed-money. Even with a recent flurry of foreign investments, it is quite possible that the deteriorating economic situation in Cuba has caused the population to reach its limit of enduring any additional hardship. Further U.S. pressure could cause the regime to split and strengthen the opposition. A lack of dollars coming into Cuba prevents Castro from purchasing the loyalty he used to buy with Soviet aid.

However, if other countries ignore the penalties, or are unaffected by them, the United States will lose when Cuba does finally fold under the pressure of "squeeze-plus." Essentially, countries like Mexico and Canada, which have developed inroads into Cuban investment and trade opportunities, will enjoy comfortable market niches as the United States is trying to pry its way through the door.

If "squeeze-plus" moves Cuba towards continued deterioration or violent revolt, uncontrolled migration would likely be the result. A revolt might also destabilize the region, since refugees could flee in other directions if the U.S. closed off its entry ports. Finally, a chaotic and economically impoverished Cuba could easily become a safe-haven for drug traffickers.

"Squeeze-Minus": The U.S. interests served in this option are by order of priority: avoiding uncontrolled migration, facilitating trade and economic development, maintaining peace and stability in the region, transition to democracy, promotion of human rights, and

interdiction of drug trafficking.

The first phase of this policy is aimed at avoiding making the situation in Cuba any worse than it is now. It recognizes that the Castro regime would probably try to take rhetorical advantage of the situation. But if preventing uncontrolled migration is the most critical policy priority, it makes sense to take political risks to ensure a peaceful transition, including the risk that Castro may exploit the policy to boost his prestige, at least temporarily, by claiming he had broken out of isolation.³⁴ The bottom line is that the populace should feel some immediate effect from the alleviation of pressure. Most observers agree that, except for the hardest *duros*, Cubans understand that it is not the embargo that has caused the economic crisis, but rather failed communist policies.

The second phase of the strategy capitalizes on the positive, or at least neutral, effects of the first phase. Keeping in mind that avoidance of uncontrolled migration is the number one priority, a graduated lessening of pressure should lend itself to a peaceful transition towards a more stable economic situation. This becomes the key to keeping migration under control; if an economy is on the upswing, there will be less incentive to leave one's home and family ties.

Peace and stability in the region should be natural end products of a Cuba moving towards economic recovery as a result of increased trade and investment. However, there is substantial risk, that as Cuba moves closer to a free-market economy, one will witness the usual pains associated with an unconstrained trade and monetary system. The most common side effects of an economic system unfettered by central government controls are wide fluctuations in unemployment and interest rates. The Cuban people are not used to these

kinds of hardships, especially from a system that is supposed to benefit them more than a socialist approach. Disillusionment with the new economic model could lead to just as much internal upheaval as that caused by a "squeeze-plus" approach. There are no guarantees in a free-market system, just a need for optimism and patience -- something that is in short supply in Cuba these days.

There is a far greater chance of Cuba transitioning to some form of democracy if the U.S. pressure for reforms is drastically reduced from current levels. It would not be as important under this option that Cuban democracy meets all of Washington's standards. Initially, at least, Cuba might do just as well with a limited form of democracy. The human rights issue would flow logically as democracy evolved and deepened. The admission of the U.N. rapporteur would be a positive first step towards an improved human rights situation. As an added incentive for the Cuban government to allow the rapporteur into the country, a concurrent report could be researched by a Latin American-led delegation from the OAS that would focus on the protection of collective rights -- such as free health care, social services and education -- which Cuba has protected fairly well.³⁵

Interdiction of drug trafficking becomes a far easier task once a sovereign nation accepts responsibility for its part in the fight. On the surface at least, Cuba has indicated that it has an interest in eliminating drug trafficking -- witness for instance, the trial and execution of accused drug trafficker General Arnaldo Ochoa. Of course, the Ochoa case may have also been a punishment for suspected political dissent and a ploy to place the Ministry of Interior under the control of the FAR and Raul Castro.³⁶ Regardless, if Cuba moves forward in other areas of U.S. interest, then drug interdiction will be far easier to attain.

Dynamic factors and "Squeeze-Plus" vs. "Squeeze-Minus"

Domestic Politics and Cuban Exile Influence. The "squeeze-plus" policy requires the American people, including Cuban Americans, to turn a blind-eye towards the increased suffering of the Cuban people that will result from increased pressure. With the exception of those Cuban Americans who may have starving family members still in Cuba, the majority of Cuban American conservatives will enthusiastically welcome this policy. This is the stance that organizations such as CANF have long advocated. In order to get to the point where the embargo and other measures (e.g., restricting the flow of dollars and travelers) combine to finally topple the regime, the patience of U.S. citizens may be stretched to the breakpoint. CNN visuals of starving or disease-ridden Cuban children will not pass the sanity check of the average American. Election years come too often for both the President and some congressmen to ignore the potentially devastating effect of even a few visuals on a politician's prospects for reelection. While "squeeze-minus" will alienate many conservative Cuban Americans, that alienation may dissipate as they realize that this policy option will leave a more viable Cuba to return to once a peaceful transition has occurred.

Cuban Nationalism. This is probably the single greatest liability of the "squeeze-plus" option. The harder the squeeze, the greater Castro's ability to unify the Cuban people behind him in defense of the nation. Nationalism remains one of the few themes which unites Cubans of diverse ideological beliefs and economic status. Though many resent Fidel, they dislike U.S. aggression even more. This option gives Castro his best opportunity to wrap himself in the Cuban flag and blame the country's economic woes on the "Colossus of the North."

Race. Blacks have not achieved equality in Cuban society, but they are much better off than in pre-Castro days. More than half of Cuba's population is black, while most exiles are non-black. Cubans fear that, if these exiles return to the island, they will not only take over but also resume the racially discriminatory practices of the past. By cozying up to this element of the exile groups, the U.S. risks alienating black Cubans. Thus, U.S. policy might be viewed as a racist attempt to isolate them and take away their gains in a post-Castro Cuba. The U.S. "squeeze-minus" option would be sensitive to this aspect of Cuban race relations and act accordingly.

Economic Changes in Cuba and Internal Politics. Real change will probably come from within Cuba and from the top down. The essential players will likely be *reformistas* and *centristas* in some form of coalition. If the economy is improving because of measures pushed by *reformistas*, it gives those elements a bit more leverage to promote political reform. The United States would therefore be wise to try to strengthen the position of *reformistas* by helping them demonstrate that economic reforms can alleviate the current crisis. The "squeeze-plus" option does just the opposite, since it seeks to worsen the economic situation by applying more pressure.

Castro's Presence. The "squeeze-plus" option supports the notion that the U.S. problem in Cuba is due to the survival of one man -- Fidel Castro. Without his charismatic leadership, the regime would lose its credibility and its hold over the Cuban people. This argument also assumes that many Cubans would quietly rejoice over the ousting of the man who had caused them to suffer for so many years. With Castro out of the way, a power vacuum would be created which could be easily filled by a *reformista* or a conservative

Cuban exile, such as the CANF's Jorge Mas Canosa. Once that occurred, all other change would come easily.

But, it is difficult to accept these assumptions. History has shown that once a dictator is gone, it is often difficult for a nation to regroup under anyone not as repressive as the ousted ruler. This suggests that lasting change may have to begin under the leadership and with the blessing of Castro. When a totalitarian system holds power for many years -- as in Cuba's case -- the entire citizenry becomes part of it, and in one way or another participates in it. For that society to change, everyone's participation is essential.³⁷ The "squeeze-minus" option recognizes that for change to be lasting, Castro must be in power to get the program moving forward. Castro does the U.S. more good at the helm of Cuba, pushing mutually beneficial reforms, than as an ousted hero of the revolution. The question under the "squeeze-minus" option becomes one of what would motivate Castro to cooperate with this approach and seek a democratic end state. The answer may lie within the realities of Cuba's regional and world trade partners.

There are both internal and external factors at play when considering trade. Internally, with the introduction of certain limited economic reforms (e.g., dollarization, investment incentives to foreign companies, diversified forms of business ownership), Cuba has already experienced a taste of one of the positive by-products of democracy. Part of the economy is still operating on the traditional model based on a non-convertible national currency, while a parallel, "dollarized" economy with a strong market orientation is growing in importance.³⁸ Unless Castro enacts drastic reverse measures, the free-market side of this dual economy will grow even more, as Cubans find ways to enter this far more lucrative territory.

Externally, Cuba needs to find its place anew in both regional and world trade. The island is situated at the center of the Caribbean regional economy, with wide-ranging export opportunities. A market-oriented Cuba reintegrated into the Caribbean economy will have substantial impact on others in the region, primarily the island economies of the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and the smaller members of the Caribbean Community and Common Market.³⁹ Cuba, however, will not find its new place with its pre-revolution mainstay exports, sugar and tourism. The island's sugar market, caught between foreign subsidies and artificial sweeteners, is all but accounted for. Even if Cuba had a windfall crop and invested heavily in the recapitalization of its sugar processing infrastructure, the trade opportunities do not exist to absorb any substantial new export of that product. By the same token, while tourism is still a solid investment in the Caribbean, one prolonged hurricane season, as experienced during 1995, can ruin an economy focused on tourists. Even if the industry continues to grow (and in recent years it has grown very fast, indeed), it will eventually run up against the limits imposed by competition with Mexico, the United States, and other Caribbean countries. Moreover, tourism requires considerable ongoing investment by the host country. Net earnings will be far less than the gross intake. The upshot is that tourism can make up for only a small percentage of the earnings that have been lost since 1989. Cuba needs to diversify with something other than a two-crop/industry economy, a solution that its current form of government cannot hope to bring about.

Mexico and Argentina are both markets for Cuba's exports. Brazil in particular, with its large domestic market, is seen as an important outlet for trade and for cooperation in electronics, biotechnology, health care, and agriculture -- all areas in which Cuba has placed

much emphasis on developing technology.⁴⁰ Until the recent Ibero-American Summit in Bariloche, Argentina in mid-October 1995, one of Cuba's most important Latin American trade partners, Argentina, had maintained an anti-Castro attitude. What is commonly heard now from Argentina, as well as other Cuban trade partners in Latin America, is that economic engagement and its attendant potential for economic reforms will create pressure for political reforms.⁴¹ The key element here is that political reform is still seen as a priority, not to be tossed aside for the sake of economic gains. To further clarify this point, one needs to view the results of Castro's attempts to enter the lucrative Asian market. Castro's trip to Japan, China and Viet Nam in the fall of 1995 brought some unexpected advice to the Cuban leader.

Prior to his Asian trip, Castro studied China's highly successful Special Economic Zones, which give broad autonomy to public enterprises, and Viet Nam's restoration of private enterprises. China and Viet Nam are far ahead of Cuba in economic terms, having enjoyed high growth rates since they opened their doors to competition, trade, and foreign investment. Instead of finding potential markets in these nations led by unreconstructed communist parties, he found little more than sympathy for his plight with the U.S. embargo. Even worse, after Chinese officials advised Castro to adjust his economic solutions to fit the realities around him, they further informed him that Cuba would no longer be able to use sugar and other commodities as barter for Chinese imports. Now hard currency must be used to continue trade with China, trade that totaled over \$500 million in 1994. Castro's last stop on the Asian trip was Japan, where he expected to test the waters for a share of that lucrative market. Instead, what he received were hints of a potential token aid package worth \$100,000, and a blunt statement from Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama.

Murayama told Castro that if he wanted to improve relations with Japan, he must respect human rights and initiate democratization.

The realities of economic gains from the free-market side of Cuba's dual economy, coupled with the desires of Latin American and Asian trade partners, should provide Castro with a fair degree of economic incentive to seek the political changes necessary for trade and investment. Thus far, none of Castro's potential investors and trade partners have insisted on a mirror-image American democracy. What they have called for is stability, something usually associated with even the most fledgling of democracies.

The Cuban Revolution was largely successful in creating the superstructure of a revolutionary society, while failing to create the material base such a superstructure requires. Building a new Cuban economy to undergird the new Cuban people and state was clearly the central and inescapable task of the Cuban Revolution.⁴² Castro could, of course, continue to follow the same economic path and hope that some Great Power might replace the stimulus and support previously provided by the former Soviet Union. But this approach is hard to imagine. There are no new patrons on the horizon. Moreover, the incentives are in place now for Castro to orchestrate his final legacy to the revolution. He can be the strong guiding hand to steadily bring Cuba into the world of free-market economies. He has already established a high literacy rate through a viable, state-provided education system, and a health care system that has been working well enough to keep Cuba's mortality rate very low for several decades. Embracing the minimums of a democratic form of government would not necessarily violate the tenets of the revolution and could serve to add economic success to the social safety net of education and health care.

CONCLUSION

U.S. policy towards Cuba has failed to promote U.S. interests in the Caribbean. Washington's strategy has been essentially aimed at the discrediting and ouster of Fidel Castro. This preoccupation has proven counterproductive. Cuba is still led by Castro and his socialist regime continues to resist the desired transition to democracy. Stability in the Caribbean region remains threatened by Cuba's worsening economy and large, viable military force. The U.S. embargo and threat of even more restrictive legislation, such as the Helms/Burton Bill, only further the suffering of the Cuban population and increase the chances of an uncontrolled mass migration to the United States. It is time to reexamine current policy and determine how best to avoid disaster and achieve the overall goal of a peaceful transition to democracy. Two options have been analyzed in this paper. The preponderance of evidence suggests that a "squeeze-plus" policy would only serve to appease the conservative Cuban American exile community, push the faltering Cuban economy to the brink of total collapse, prolong the suffering of the Cuban people, and probably lead to the use of military force. Few interests are served by this option.

A "squeeze-minus" approach begins with a concept that might be uncomfortable to policy makers and loathsome to some U.S. citizens -- that is, the concept of "something for nothing." In the first phase of this option, the U.S. would essentially take actions to improve relations, yet ask nothing immediate in return. Washington's goal would not be to extract reciprocal concessions, but simply establish and define a new and constructive climate in which relations could develop.⁴³ Once the first phase of "squeeze-minus" is completed, it would be followed by a series of steps designed to meet our interests and generate reciprocal

moves by the Castro regime. This option is not guaranteed to succeed, but the odds are in favor of at least decreasing the hostility and differences between the two sides. The ultimate price to be paid for not instituting such a policy could be an uncontrollable eruption in Cuba which produces an outmigration problem of extreme magnitude. We do not need another "Haiti" ninety miles away from our shores when there are more pressing demands on our increasingly limited military and national resources. It is time to finally match our stated objectives for the Caribbean with a policy that supports rather than defeats those goals.

ENDNOTES

1. William J. Clinton, The National Security Strategy (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1995), 21.
2. Gillian Gunn, Cuba In Transition (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1993), 13.
3. Edward Gonzalez and David Ronfeldt, Storm Warnings for Cuba (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1994), xiv.
4. Susan E. Eckstein, Back From The Future (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15.
5. Cited in Donald E. Schulz, "The United States, Cuba and the Future: From a Strategy of Conflict to Constructive Engagement," Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs 35, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 83.
6. For a complete treatment of the separate concepts of "communication" and "normalization," see Gillian Gunn's work in Chapters 5 and 6 of Cuba in Transition.
7. Richard Cohen, "Hubbub Over Arafat, Silence on Castro," Washington Post, 26 October 1995, p. A31.
8. Gillian Gunn, The Sociological Impact of Rising Foreign Investment Georgetown University Briefing Paper Series, no.1, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, January 1993), 14. See also Cuba in Transition 89.
9. Jim Hampton, "Tied In Knots," Miami Herald 3 March 1996, editorial sec. p. 3.
10. Clinton, 29-30.
11. Gunn, 11.
12. Ibid., 25.
13. Readers may recall that the battleship "U.S.S. Maine" was blown up in Havana harbor in February 1898. This led to the destruction of the Spanish Armada in Santiago Harbor and a subsequent invasion by U.S. troops into Santiago, Cuba. These events began the Spanish-American War which was fought from April 20, 1898 until the Spanish were defeated in Cuba and signed a treaty in Paris on December 10th of that same year. Once the Spanish occupying force left Cuba after the war, U.S. military forces took over control until May 20, 1902. A constitutional convention was held by the Cubans from November 5, 1900 until February 21, 1901. Certain conditions, known as the Platt Amendment, were imposed by the United States and accepted as part of the new Cuban constitution on June 12, 1901. The

main points of the amendment were as follows: Cuba was not to incur debts its current revenues could not cover. It was to continue the sanitary administration undertaken by the military government of the intervention and lease naval stations (Guantanamo Bay). Finally, there was an affirmation of the U.S. right to intervene, if necessary, in the affairs of the island. This last provision became the focal point of much debate and resentment by Cubans. The Platt Amendment essentially gave the U.S. the right to intervene in the sovereignty of another nation whenever the U.S. felt it necessary. The measure was later rescinded in 1934, but not before extensive damage was done to the attitude of Cubans towards their "interfering" neighbors to the north.

14. Gunn, 42.

15. Edward Gonzalez and David Ronfeldt, Cuba Adrift in a Postcommunist World (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation Press, 1992), 15.

16. Ibid., 16.

17. Donald E. Schulz, "Can Castro Survive," Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs 35, no. 1 (1993): 109.

18. Gonzalez and Ronfeldt, 23.

19. Edward Gonzalez and David Ronfeldt, Storm Warnings for Cuba (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation Press, 1994), x.

20. Schulz , "Can Castro Survive," 103 .

21. Gunn, 62.

22. Gonzalez and Ronfeldt, Storm Warnings for Cuba 14 .

23. Ibid., 15.

24. Enrique A. Baloyra and James A. Morris, eds., Conflict and Change in Cuba (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 7. See also Storm Warnings for Cuba 15.

25. Gonzalez and Ronfeldt, Storm Warnings for Cuba 18.

26. Leaders like Roberto Robaina, Carlos Lage and Ricardo Alarcon, and at one time Carlos Aldana, are being groomed to inherit Cuba once the Castros have departed. In exchange for continued obedience to Castro, career advancement is allowed. They can express ideas of their own so long as these ideas are within the boundaries of what Fidel will tolerate. This type of arrangement characterizes the fundamental rule of Cuban politics. Donald E. Schulz, in his work entitled "Can Castro Survive?", explains how Carlos Aldana may have passed out of favor with Fidel and eliminated himself as both a Politburo member and heir to a post-

Castro leadership role. By aligning himself with reformer ideas and a pro-Gorbachev and perestroika stance, Aldana moved further out on a limb branching away from the ideas of Castro. Aldana's willingness to tolerate some dissent, and even to suggest that dissidents be able to participate in parliamentary elections, probably broke that "limb." His attempts to reverse his earlier opinions was not enough to prevent his removal from office and expulsion from the Communist Party in September of 1992. For additional details, see Schulz, "Can Castro Survive?", 104-5.

27. Gonzalez and Ronfeldt, Storm Warnings for Cuba 22.
28. Cathy Booth, "Fidel's Brother Sets Up Shop," Time, 14 November 1994, 69.
29. Gonzalez and Ronfeldt, Storm Warnings for Cuba 23.
30. Walter Russell Mead, "Rum and Coca Cola, The United States and The New Cuba," World Policy Journal, Vol. XII, no. 3, (Fall 1995): 41.
31. Daphne Barak with Richard Gooding, "Semper Fidel," THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 213, no. 18, (30 October 1995): 12.
32. Marifeli Perez-Stable, The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 180-81.
33. In this context "American form of democracy" means an exact replica of our system in the United States. This would include such features as the multi-party system, bi-cameral Congress, three branches of government (legislative, executive, and judicial), all supported by a civilian-controlled military that supports the elected government operating in a free-market economy.
34. Gunn, 59.
35. Ibid., 88.
36. Gonzalez and Ronfeldt, Storm Warnings for Cuba 14.
37. Oscar Pena, "A New Cuba Calls for a Gradual Change," Miami Herald, 22 November 1995, p.15A.
38. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Preliminary Overview of the Latin American and Caribbean Economy 1995 (Santiago, Chile: United Nations, December 1995), 31.
39. Ernest H. Preeg with Jonathan D. Levine, Cuba and the New Caribbean Economic Order (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1993), xv.

40. Gareth Jenkins, "Beyond Basic Needs: Cuba's Search for Stable Development in the 1990's," in Cuba in Transition: Crisis and Transformation ed. Sandor Halebsky and John M. Kirk (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 149.

41. Howard LaFranchi, "Castro Warms Latin Leaders as US Chills," Christian Science Monitor, 23 October 1995, p. 18.

42. Mead, 43.

43. Ibid., 52.

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